

Message Text

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SUBJ: SOVIET OVERSEAS BASES

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1. THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY IS CURRENTLY LOOKING INTO THE NATURE
AND EXTENT OF SOVIET FACILITIES AND BASES OUTSIDE THE USSR AND THE
WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES. ALTHOUGH THE STUDY MAY PROVE TO BE OF USE TO
THE EMBASSY, THE DEPT HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT DISSEMINATING ANY
MATERIAL THAT MIGHT INVITE COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE FOREIGN MILITARY
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BASES OF THE US AND OTHER COUNTRIES. TO DO SO RUNS THE RISK OF IN-
VITING INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS WITH US BASES ON THE SCALE OF SUBIC BAY

AND CLARK FIELD AND OF CALLING ATTENTION TO THE GREATLY DIMINISHED BRITISH AND FRENCH OVERSEAS BASE--SYSTEM--AN EXAMPLE THAT MANY COUNTRIES ARE EAGER TO URGE UPON US.

2. THE SOVIET BASES IN EASTERN EUROPE ARE IN A CLASS BY THEMSELVES. BUT SOVIET MILITARY FACILITIES OUTSIDE EASTERN EUROPE ARE NOT COMPARABLE TO SUBIC BAY, CLARK FIELD OR GUAM. NEITHER ARE THE FEW REMAINING BRITISH AND FRENCH OVERSEAS BASES OR FACILITIES.

3. SOVIET USE OF FACILITIES AT SUCH PLACES AS CONAKRY AND GUINEA-BISSAU, OR THEIR NEW INSTALLATION AT BERBERA, COULD AT SOME POINT BECOME KEY ELEMENTS IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF SOVIET MILITARY POWER FAR BEYOND THE HOMELAND. THE SOVIET SURVEILLANCE AIRCRAFT FLIGHTS THAT TAKE PLACE SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR FROM CONAKRY ALREADY HAVE AN IMPORTANT STRATEGIC FUNCTION. LATAKIA IS AN IMPORTANT SUPPLY AND REPAIR FACILITY--AT THE MOMENT THE ONLY MEDITERRANEAN FACILITY OF MUCH CONSEQUENCE--ALTHOUGH IT IS MODEST BY US BASE STANDARDS. BUT THE STATUS OF SOVIET USE OF AND RIGHTS TO OVERSEAS FACILITIES AT THIS STAGE MAY BE TENUOUS. FOR EXAMPLE THE USSR HAS HAD TO PUT UP WITH INCREASING RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF EGYPTIAN PORTS AND AIRFIELDS. THE USSR HAS YET TO ESTABLISH THE RELATIVELY SECURE POSITION THAT WE HAVE USUALLY ENJOYED AT OUR MAJOR BASES.

4. IN THE INDIAN OCEAN THE FRENCH WERE RECENTLY OBLIGED TO TRANSFER THEIR NAVAL FACILITIES AT DIEGO SURAEX TO REUNION, A NOT VERY SATISFACTORY SUBSTITUTE. A BASE MAY LATER BE ESTABLISHED IN THE COMORROS, WHERE A SMALL UNIT OF THE FOREIGN LEGION IS STILL STATIONED. ANOTHER FRENCH NAVAL BASE IS AT DJIBOUTI, THE ONLY REMAINING FRENCH BASE IN AFRICA. OUTSIDE DJIBOUTI FRANCE HAS ONLY SMALL CONTINGENTS OF TROOPS IN CHAD, GABON AND THE IVORY COAST. HOWEVER, FRANCE ALSO HAS BUNKERING AND OTHER NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITIES IN DAKAR.

4. THE UK'S FOREIGN BASES HAVE BEEN GREATLY REDUCED OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS AND FURTHER REDUCTIONS OF MILITARY BASES OR FACILITIES ARE IN THE OFFING, MALTA AND THE SOVEREIGN BASE AREA IN
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CYPRUS BEING CASES IN POINT. GIBRALTAR WILL PROBABLY REMAIN UNDER BRITISH CONTROL FOR SOME TIME, BUT IT WILL BE ONE OF THE LAST OF THE FORMER WIDESPREAD BRITISH NAVAL BASES. KISSINGER

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